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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
HA-05 EUR-12 /085 W
----------005996 210532Z /17
R 202104Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9597
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CI
SUBJECT: BERNARDO LEIGHTON RETURNS TO CHILE

REF: SANTIAGO 3611

1. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) LEADER BERNARDO LEIGHTON GUZMAN AND WIFE RETURNED TO CHILE JUNE 19, ENDING 52 MONTHS OF EXILE. LEIGHTON HAD LEFT CHILE FOR ROME IN FEBRUARY 1974, ACCEPTING AN INVITATION FROM THE ITALIAN PDC. IN OCTOBER 1974 THE GOC PUBLISHED A DE-CREE ENYING HIM RE-ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY FOR ATTACKING THE JUNTA ABROAD. IN EXILE, LEIGHTON CAME TO REPRESENT THE PDC LEFT-WING AND CONTINUED HIS FORAYS AGAINST THE GOC, OFTEN SHARING THE SAME PLATFORM WITH FORMER UP FIGURES. THE LEIGHTONS WERE VICTIMS OF AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT -- WIDELY BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN PERPETRATED BY THE DINA -- IN ROME ON OCTOBER 6, 1975. BOTH RECOVERED, ALTHOUGH MRS. LEIGHTON WALKS WITH CRUTCHES.

2. AN ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN 250 AND 400 RECEIVED THE LEIGHTONS UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF A LARGE CARABINERO CONTINGENT. ALTHOUGH SHOUTS SUCH
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AS "BERNARDO AMIGO, EL PUEBLO ESTA CONTIGO" (FRIEND BERNARDO, THE PEOPLE ARE WITH YOU) FILLED THE AIR, THE RECEPTION WAS ORDERLY. FORMER PRESIDENT EDUARDO FREI AND PDC IDEOLOGUE JAIME CASTILLO -- WHO HIMSELF ENDED 20 MONTHS OF EXILE IN APRIL -- HEADED THE SIZABLE PDC DELEGATION. SOME PDC YOUTHS LATER STAGED A SMALL DEMON-STRATION IN FRONT OF THE FORMER PDC HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

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ON BERNARDO O'HIGGINS AVENUE. THERE WERE NO REPORTED ARRESTS.

3. COMMENT: LEIGHTON IS THE BEST KNOWN EXILE PERMITTED TO RETURN SINCE THE GOC ANNOUNCED MORE LIBERAL POLICIES IN MARCH. LIKE CASTILLO HE PROBABLY DID NOT SIGN ANY SPECIFIC RENUNCIATION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE GOC IS PALYING LEIGHTON'S RETURN AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT IT SEEKS TO HEAL THE WOUNDS OF THE PAST.

4. IN RESPONSE TO STATE 136322, EMBASSY IS PREPARING ASSESSMENT OF GOC'S OVERALL RESPONSE TO EXILES' REQUEST FOR RE-ENTRY.
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